
The author of these Letters is a Senior General Officer of wide experience, who is on the active list and has sons holding commissions

A GENERAL'S LETTERS TO HIS SON

*On Obtaining
His Commission*



“These letters give all necessary information, and if young Officers will only study them carefully and shape their conduct accordingly they need have no fear of proving unworthy.”

— GENERAL SIR H. L. SMITH-DORRIEN

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BY

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A GENERAL'S
LETTERS TO HIS SON

A General's Letters to His Son

*On Obtaining His
Commission*

WITH PREFACE BY
GENERAL H. S. SMITH-DORRIEN



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PREFACE

Enormous numbers of young officers have joined our fighting ranks in the last two and a half years and are still joining. Owing to the improvisation of huge armies for the purpose of this gigantic war for the safeguarding of freedom, truth, honour, and civilisation, training, which normally takes years, has to be compressed into a few months; and owing to the paucity of officers versed in the traditions of the Service and lack of time, it is impossible to provide the guidance for these young fellows which is necessary if they are to conduct themselves and carry out their duties up to the high standard of officers of our pre-war armies.

There is no doubt that there is a universal desire on the part of these officers to do this, and my advice to them is to read and study these excellent letters by a General Officer,

Preface

whose opinion is worth having, and who has thereto set down his carefully thought-out views formed in the course of thirty-eight years' experience devoted to the Service.

(Signed) H. S. SMITH-DORRIEN

General

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A GENERAL'S LETTERS TO HIS SON

I

ON BEING GAZETTED

June 1, 1916

MY DEAR DICK, —

I see that you have been gazetted as a Second Lieutenant to my old Regiment, and you have my most sincere congratulations and good wishes.

As it is impossible for me to see you, I shall write to you from time to time giving you advice, which will be written less as from a father to a son than as from a senior officer to a young one in whom he takes an interest. In my letters I shall try to avoid touching on religion and kindred subjects, as this has always been your mother's rôle, but you must not think because I avoid them that I think them of no consequence, for quite the contrary is the case.

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I was not as young as you are when I joined, and in normal times you also would have been a good deal older before you donned the King's uniform; but whatever you may be in years you must remember that henceforth it is up to you to acquit yourself as a man. You have had the liberty which accompanies man's estate given to you somewhat suddenly, for it is not long since you left school. I know that many temptations will offer themselves to you, for the hundred-and-one things in order to do which you have longed to be a man are now open to you; but you must always bear in mind that your time, your brain, and your life are now no longer your own, but the State's, which is in urgent need of them, and I am sure that you can be trusted not to abuse your newly gained freedom.

In the British Service, contrary to the custom obtaining in many countries, no actual oath of allegiance is taken, but in granting you a commission the Sovereign presupposes your allegiance and devotion,

On Being Gazetted

and calls you his “trusty and well beloved,” and the possession of this commission gives you the right to demand to be treated as an officer and a gentleman. It is the admission to the knightly caste. I believe that in our army of old days the two lower commissioned ranks were looked upon as the equivalent of page and squire, whereas the Field Officer, who wears spurs, was regarded as the successor of the knight.

As you probably know, in India there are four main castes: the Brahmins, or priestly caste; the Kshatriyas, or fighting caste; the Vaisyas, or trading caste; and the Sudras, who carry on the lower trades and other such occupations; besides which more than one half of the Hindu population are untouchables; but the only men besides the Brahmins who are designated as “twice-born,” and are allowed to wear the sacred thread, are the fighting caste, which in Asia, as in Europe, is the caste of knights and kings.

To go farther east is to come across the Samurai with their elaborate code of hon-

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our, or "Bushido," which gives the men of knightly caste certain privileges, that, strange as some of them may seem to us, are most highly prized. Until the last fifty years, since which time the size of the army has no longer permitted it, officers in the German Army came principally from the "Adel," or nobility; and in Germany, until quite lately, the only way for a gentleman not having "von" before his name to obtain admission to Court was to become an officer, which put him socially on equality with the nobility.

I have touched on these points because I want you never to forget that in joining the profession of arms you have adopted a calling which in all parts of the world, and from the earliest times, is admitted to be amongst the highest that a man can enter; and in adopting that calling, as a British officer, you further have the knowledge, especially at the present juncture, that you are doing so with the express purpose of fighting in the greatest of all wars on the side of right and freedom, against the

On Being Gazetted

forces of tyranny, injustice, and barbarism.

Should you want further incentives to noble deeds you will find these in the history of your Regiment, which you must now feel entrusted to your safe-keeping. Until a few years ago the most cherished of the regimental traditions were connected with the names of Corunna, Badajoz, and Waterloo, which are emblazoned on the Colours; but deeds of the last two years in which the new battalions of the Regiment, as well as the old ones, have taken part have equalled, if not eclipsed, all that was done by our ancestors. And it is for you to see that your brother and the hundreds of thousands of others who gave their lives to save disaster before the nation was prepared, did not die in vain, and by devotion to duty in all its branches to do your utmost to bring about a complete victory for our cause.

Before the war it was the delight of a certain section of our population to regard the officer as a brainless, swaggering, dis-

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solute fellow who always tried to avoid paying his debts. As a matter of fact, the contrary was the case, and, considering the size of the army, there was no profession in the kingdom which was more orderly in its behaviour, while there was certainly none in which the above vices were more severely dealt with. Nevertheless, it was the custom to pillory an officer for any apparent breach of convention, without even giving him the benefit of the doubt, or inquiring into the real motive underlying his action; whereas, had he been a civilian, his conduct would have passed without comment. Of those who were regimental officers at the commencement of the war not many are now left, and those that are left are looked on as worth their weight in gold; but when peace again reigns you must expect to hear soldiers taunted by politicians for want of brains and by bureaucrats for their poverty.

Were they as a class less scrupulous, they would more often avoid both these indictments; but the wealth you seek should be

On Being Gazetted

neither office nor riches, but honour and your own self-esteem.

I know that you were always proud of your grandmother's family motto, "Virtutis gloria merces," and undoubtedly glory and not riches is the proper reward of valour; but it is the consciousness of having done your duty, rather than the glory which accrues from it, that should be your aim.

In conclusion, my advice to you is the same that was given to me by my father on his death-bed, namely, that if ever you have two courses open to you and are in doubt as to which of them you should pursue, you should take that which you consider to be the most honourable, and that which is most thoroughly playing the game for your pals and for your side, eliminating all idea of personal advantage.

I shall write to you again before you join.

Your affectionate father,

"X. Y. Z."

II

ON JOINING THE BATTALION

August 1, 1916

MY DEAR DICK, —

I hear that you have received orders to join your Battalion. I remember distinctly the day on which I joined mine, and my first day in the Mess.

Like most things we have to face, the idea is much more terrible than the actuality; and to you, who have been at a Public School, the ordeal ought not to be so trying as to another who has not had this advantage. You are sure to find that you are kindly received as long as you are modest in your behaviour, and err on the side of diffidence rather than on that of self-assertion.

I will tell you one or two stories, about men who joined when I was a subaltern. One day a very carefully dressed youngster walked into the Mess with a self-satisfied

On Joining the Battalion

air. As several cadets had been gazetted, and we did not know which of them he was, the Senior Subaltern asked him his name, to which he replied in a rather la-de-da manner, "My name is Raymond Vere de Vere Grosvenor." The Senior Subaltern said, "All right, we will call you Buggins," and Buggins he was called as long as ever he remained in the Regiment, and although he eventually turned out quite a good fellow, he had not a very rosy time to begin with. I also remember a nervous, callow youngster, whom we afterwards called "Boy" Brown, joining in India. He had had a very rough passage, was a bad sailor, and two nights in the train had not freshened him up. He was so shy and nervous when he walked into the Mess that as we one after the other shook hands with him we could hardly help laughing in his face.

The next day there was a steeplechase meeting, and a jockey was wanted for a brute that nobody cared to ride, when "Boy" Brown came up and shyly asked

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for the mount, got the brute round the course, and came in a good third. He was made quite a hero of that night at Mess, and at once became a favourite with us all.

In the years immediately preceding the war a great deal was heard about "ragging," and there is no doubt that the means taken to teach young officers manners were often reprehensible; but, take it all round, the education they used to get from the Senior Subaltern was excellent, and in many cases badly needed. The Senior Subalterns were hardly ever men who could be accused of snobbery, and I have never known an officer promoted from the ranks to have anything but a good reception, though youngsters with swollen heads were always put into their proper places.

You ask me how you should address your senior officers. It is the custom of the Service for all officers of the rank of Captain or under to call one another by their surnames without any prefix. The Colonel you should always address as

On Joining the Battalion

“Colonel” or “Sir,” and a youngster should also always address a Major as “Major” or “Sir,” unless he is especially told not to do so. I have lately received several letters from officers, addressing me as “Dear Sir,” instead of “Dear General,” or “Dear General Z——” if the writer did not know me well. Of course, you know that you should reserve the words “Dear Sir” for your business letters.

In some regiments in the Old Army a great deal of familiarity of address used to be allowed in the Mess, but these were regiments in which the discipline was always above suspicion, and it is unlikely in battalions of to-day, constituted as they are mostly of officers who had not joined when war commenced, that any liberties in this respect would be wise. On parade you should invariably address your senior as “Sir.”

You must endeavour to be on good terms with everybody. It is only natural that you will find that some spirits are more kindred to you than others; but

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whenever you can do so by little acts of kindness, try to ingratiate yourself with all if this can be done without loss of principle or self-respect.

Be very chary with your confidence, and only give it to those of whom you feel as certain as you can be that they are worthy of it. Avoid making enemies, especially of making them among men who are likely to hit below the belt. It is a true saying that we should choose our enemies as carefully as we choose our friends. A Bayard may be a more formidable antagonist than a Hun, but he is a pleasanter man to deal with, either in peace or war, and you are placed at a great disadvantage in having in your antagonist one who will condescend to means to which you cannot stoop.

Whatever the conduct of the enemy, it should be no excuse for lowering your own standard. There is a good story, which is also true, of one of our officers in the North Sea, who, when a German officer was brought on board after having been rescued from drowning, entertained him in his

On Joining the Battalion

cabin, gave him a new rig-out, and a good cigar. As a reward this disciple of Kultur spat in his face. When he was asked what he did in return, he only remarked, "Poor devil! I pitied him for being such an unmitigated cad, but I suppose he was born like that, and a leopard can't change his spots." You are nonplussed in dealing with a man who spits if you have been brought up not to spit back.

There is a very necessary and hard-and-fast rule that ladies' names should never be mentioned in the Mess, and however junior you may be, should you hear officers transgressing this rule, you should either call their attention to it or yourself get up and go away.

Avoid extravagance, with your money, in your dress, or in anything else. Remember that the best-dressed man is the one who you know is well dressed, but whose clothes are so unnoticeable that you cannot remember what he had on; and you should have no ambition to be known by the shape of your hat or the colour of your tie.

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There is no petty vice which is so much disliked among men of the profession of arms as is meanness. Never be led away by the idea that generosity and extravagance are in any way akin. I have known the man who would put a "monkey" on a race, or lose a couple of "ponies" on a game of poker, and who would try to avoid giving the gamekeeper the tip he had the right to expect, or would under-pay his cabman if nobody were looking. I have also known men who drink champagne every night, and refuse a "fiver" to an old friend who had got down in the world. And I have, on the contrary, known men who would stint themselves their glass of port after dinner in order either to keep a hunter or to be able to tip the waiter. These men killed two birds with one stone, for they achieved their direct purpose, and also by practising restraint strengthened their characters.

I don't want you to think that I am lecturing you, nor do I expect you will avoid getting into scrapes any more than

On Joining the Battalion

I did. The four-year-old which never has any will of its own seldom turns out a really good hunter, and the puppy which never runs wild seldom becomes a first-class dog; so with the human subject, the young must have their fling, and this in ordinary times must be forgiven as long as a man never does anything that is ungentlemanly.

In the old days a good deal used to be drunk in the Mess, and I can recollect big guest-nights when chargers were brought into the dining-room and jumped over the tables; but those days have gone for ever, and a good thing too, though their memories are associated with some of the best of fellows — who were, however, the best of fellows in spite of, and not by reason of, such escapades. Now it is considered bad form for an officer to exceed in the least, even inside the precincts of the Mess, and there can be no doubt that the less a man drinks the fitter he keeps. Alcohol does a little good sometimes, and a great deal of harm very often. If the whole nation were

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moderate, no restrictions with regard to its consumption would be advisable. As a restorative on rare occasions there is nothing like a pint of champagne, and the tot of rum sometimes given to the men in the trenches puts new vigour into them; but if taken as a daily ration, alcohol loses its potency as a "pick-me-up." To put it in another way, I consider that if the good that alcohol does is represented by the figure 5, the harm it does is represented by 95; and, this being so, I very much regret that we did not follow the Russian lead when they prohibited the sale of vodka during the war. If I thought that there were any chances of drink having much attraction for you, I should urge you to become a teetotaller; but as things are I do not do this, though I think that the less you drink the better, and you will find that if you are very abstemious in your habits there are sure to be others in your Mess who are equally so, and you will not be looked on with suspicion as would have been the case in the old days.

On Joining the Battalion

Always remember that you are joining your Regiment during the greatest crisis in which your country has ever found itself, that it is your bounden duty to do everything in your power to make yourself a fit instrument in her service, and that, in spite of what I said just now about youngsters having their fling, this is a period for work, and for work only.

Your affectionate father,

“X. Y. Z.”

III

ON DISCIPLINE

September 1, 1916

MY DEAR DICK, —

My subject in writing to you to-day will be discipline as applied to the soldier and his officer.

It is a word of which you will, no doubt, have heard much, but it is also one the importance of which absolutely cannot be exaggerated. It is the moral force which creates the essential difference between an army and a collection of men with muskets. Without it genius, hardihood, and endurance are wasted. It is discipline which enables men to hold on and stick it out when all seems up. It was discipline which enabled our Expeditionary Force to get back from Mons, and it was discipline which enabled some battalions to get back with comparatively no losses from stragglers, whilst others lost many.

On Discipline

In a well-disciplined unit men find it almost impossible not to obey the commander's voice, however tired they may be, or however terrible the order. They thus work as one man.

When, during the Mutiny, the Residency at Lucknow was besieged by the mutineers, their trenches were in some places only forty or fifty yards from ours. We know how brave some of the native races of India are; they outnumbered us by twenty to one; and if they had, directed by a single leader, made a charge on a large front, they could undoubtedly have got in, but as they had no confidence in their commanders, and no discipline, the Residency held out until it was relieved. Had the Boers had discipline on Waggon Hill on January 6, 1900, they could have taken it; but, fortunately for us, they had not, and Ladysmith held out. It is discipline which puts it within the power of the commander by sacrificing part of his force to save the rest. Napoleon used to say that the moral is to the physical as three is to

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one, and among moral forces none is for the soldier more important than discipline. It is the force which prevents a defeat being turned into a rout, and which in the hour of victory keeps troops under control. Discipline gives confidence, and confidence gives courage. In a disciplined company when the Captain has given the word to advance, the individual man obeys, certain that whether he advances or not his comrades on either side will do so, and whatever his own feelings may be, he cannot but obey. Having done so, and believing himself a hero among a band of heroes, he acquires the courage which comes from discipline, and becomes a brave man though he was not born one.

I have known the Germans intimately, both in peace and in war, and am convinced that individually they have nothing like the fighting spirit and fearless courage which is the birthright of the British race, but unfortunately for us they are the most disciplined nation in the world, and it is this quality which renders them so formidable.

On Discipline

It is discipline which enables them to out-dig us. Their men are not physically stronger than ours, but by means of discipline their officers can generally get more work out of them than we do out of ours, as anybody will admit who has been in a trench which the Germans have taken on temporary loan from us and have turned against us during the few hours of their occupation. The atrocities which the Germans have committed in Belgium, and other parts of the world, must not be attributed to lack of discipline, for had the authorities wished to stop these atrocities they could have done so. The outrages have been committed by the order of high command, with the object of terrorising inhabitants, and have not been due to lax discipline. A German is disciplined from the time he leaves his cradle.

The words which] you see posted up more often than any others in Germany are “Es ist strengstens verboten” (“It is strictly forbidden”). It is forbidden to do so much that, as a friend once remarked

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to me, it would be much simpler to post up once for all, "It is forbidden to do anything that you want to do." But, however disagreeable all these imposed restrictions may be, they decidedly tend to make a disciplined people which is tractable and ready to submit its own will to that of its leaders, and the German soldier fears and implicitly obeys his officer or non-commissioned officer, whoever he may be.

In absolute contradistinction to this is the discipline exercised by British officers over our Indian and African troops, which is the outcome of the officer's own personality. They love, respect, and obey Captain Smith Sahib Bahadur, and accept his decision or follow him anywhere on account of their respect for and personal devotion to him; but if another captain, whom they do not know, be brought into the company, the company suffers until the men learn also to know and respect him.

In the British Army the discipline exercised is something between these two extremes. Your men will obey you because

On Discipline

you are their officer, but you will succeed in getting infinitely more out of them if you can win their love and respect. Let your Platoon always be your first care. Put yourself in the position of your men, and never ask them to do what you would not yourself be ready to do in like circumstances. Care for their comfort, and remember the British soldier is, as a rule, most extraordinarily improvident. He has been in the habit of having everything provided for him and thought out for him. It is a great pity that this is so, but at present you must take it as a fact, and try to counteract the consequences by your own forethought.

I think that the most marked difference between the old Regular and the New Army officers is the care and knowledge of their men which the former displayed.

I remember once in South Africa seeing a company of Colonial Mounted Infantry who had been twenty-four hours without food. The little wheeled transport which the company had with it carried either

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non-essentials or the officers' kit, and the men hungered. Alongside it was a company of Regular Mounted Infantry with its Scotch cart. I had previously asked the Captain whether I might put my coat, which was inconveniencing me on my saddle, on this cart, but he most respectfully and politely pointed out that the cart was entirely the property of the men, and asked me not to do so, as he had calculated every pound which was carried on it. The men of this company always had enough to eat, and the Colonial company envied them their officers.

In France the provision made by old Regular officers for dry clothes and comforts for the men usually compares very favourably indeed with those made by the majority of men with less experience, and I have seen many cases of men returned from the trenches remaining in wet clothes for hours, when forethought could have prevented this.

I have the greatest admiration for the gallant fellows who have come forward as

On Discipline

officers, and who have practically always been an example to their men in courage and devotion to duty, and it is far from my wish to decry their efforts. My object in making the above remarks is to call to mind that it is as important to look after your men, and keep them fit, as it is to lead them well in action. If you look after your men, and if they know that in you they have a friend upon whom they may depend, you may rely on their never leaving you in the lurch.

Always consider your men's comforts before you think of your own. Choose a good batman to look after your personal comfort, for if you are not physically fit you cannot do your duty properly, but make your Platoon your own care. I have always taught you when you came home from hunting to see that your horse had his gruel before you looked after yourself, and you cannot well do less for your men than you do for your horse.

Discipline, like charity, begins at home, and you must see that you yourself possess

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what you try to inculcate. If you consider that you have been unjustly treated, and that another, less competent than you, has received the promotion which you yourself expected, keep your feelings to yourself. Refuse to be embittered, and do your duty as cheerily as ever.

This war is not being fought in order that you may get advancement. Do not criticise your superiors, and try to discourage others from doing so. The same measure that you mete out will be meted out to you again. Always remember that your Platoon, your Company, or your Battalion are not the whole force, but small parts of the whole, and that in making a plan the commander must think of what is for the good of the whole, and not of special units or individuals.

No man is infallible, and it may well happen that your immediate superior has not tackled the problem in front of him in the best manner; but whatever his orders are, back him up, heart and soul, and remember that a fairly sound plan energeti-

On Discipline

cally carried out will generally succeed, but that a perfect one is doomed to failure if not properly supported. Do all you can to inculcate *esprit de corps*, and try yourself to live up to a high standard, which is the best way of getting your subordinates to do the same.

Smartness in turnout, punctiliousness in saluting, exactness in guard duties, all make for discipline.

When all is going well and sailing smoothly, no great difference may be noticeable between the work of a well-disciplined battalion and that of one in which the discipline is not above reproach. But it is when men are tired and distressed that it is most difficult to maintain discipline, and it is then that it is also most necessary to do so.

Even on a route march but little difference between the marching of the above-mentioned battalions would be noticeable for the first few miles, but when the men began to get tired it would be very marked.

Always bear in mind that none of the

A General's Letters to his Son

things you have learnt in peace are meant to be scrapped when you find yourself in face of the enemy, but that what you have learnt was taught with the express object of being put into execution on active service.

Do not be afraid of a little humour if it be to the point, and never forget that a good joke goes far to get over the road when it is long and uphill, while the perfection of manners is to be able to maintain *camaraderie* without degenerating into familiarity.

Learn to be cheerful under difficulties, make little of the hardships you have to endure, never grumble, and do not forget that, however bad things are, they might be much worse. Remember always to play for your side, and not for your own bat. As long as your side wins it is of small account who kicked the goal or made most runs.

Your one and only object must be, regardless of self, to do your best to enable your country to beat the enemy.

Your affectionate father,

“X. Y. Z.”

IV

ON NATIONAL DISCIPLINE AND THE TEMPTATIONS OF LONDON

October 1, 1916

MY DEAR DICK, —

I have lately heard much about the condition of London, and especially of the streets. An old friend writes to me that the other day he walked down the Strand and through Leicester Square in the afternoon, and was amazed at the number of painted women who ogled him in broad daylight. Continuing his course westward, he saw many glaring posters of the different entertainments being performed at the music-halls, and was also struck by the headlines of the evening papers, from which it appeared that the war was practically over. Going farther westward, he met ladies belonging to a higher scale in the social status, but carrying as much paint as those in Leicester Square, al-

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though it was, as a rule, more artistically put on. All this was very bad hearing to me, for we have got to get down to it if we are to win this war, and people whose women paint themselves and who delight in music-halls and questionable cinematograph films, when the greatest tragedy of all times is being enacted by their brothers, are not getting down to it. We are also not helping to win the war by deceiving ourselves with the idea that it is over, by magnifying small successes until they appear to be great victories, and by at the same time insisting on shutting our eyes to the more seamy side of the picture. The truth is not always palatable, but it is wholesome, and it is the only foundation on which one can build without courting disaster.

From all I hear I fear that the atmosphere of society, and, indeed, the general atmosphere of London at the present time, is unreal and untrue. There are too many people who live on excitement, and when they can't get it complain of being "bored."

On National Discipline

Waves of optimism follow waves of depression, and which of the two is the worse I really do not know; but both are bad, and until the nation alters we shall not win, for we are not fit to win, and I am as certain as I can be of anything that victory in this titanic contest will not be given to a nation which is morally unsound and superficial.

I hear that officers in uniform are often to be seen walking with women who undoubtedly are members of the *demi-monde*, and with this example it is not to be wondered at that the men do the same even more flagrantly, our Colonial troops, probably on account of their drawing more money, being especially noticeable. I promised not to preach morality, but without trespassing on morals I can say that officers thus degrading the King's uniform deserve to be cashiered. It is urged that officers behave themselves in this way in uniform because they are not allowed to wear mufti. My only answer is that of all times the present is the most inappropriate for associating with *cocottes*.

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Putting the moral aspect of the question aside, and approaching it only from the utilitarian point of view, we now want every man we can get, and he who runs the risk of diseasing himself is performing a most unpatriotic act. It is English law that a man should only be judged by his peers, and you may say with justice that in this matter I am not one of your peers. My answer is that exceptional times and circumstances demand exceptional legislation.

My friend, of whom I spoke at the beginning of this letter, also mentioned that there appeared to be a great deal of drinking going on among the officers of the New Army. The idea of officers in uniform exceeding in public places, or of their making a habit of frequenting bars, would, in the pre-war days, have been looked on as impossible. In many cases those who have newly joined have not had the advantages of early training which the old Regular officer generally had, but they have joined the fighting caste, and *noblesse oblige*. Bar-loafers are not leaders of men.

On National Discipline

What a ten thousand pities it is that the nation did not as one man follow the lead given by our King and by Lord Kitchener in renouncing drink for the period of the war! Not only would it have saved us half a million a day, but it would have immensely increased efficiency throughout the nation.

It is a spirit such as the Covenanters had which wins battles, and this, I fear, is not the spirit of our nation to-day. On this side of the water most people are for ever thinking of what they can *get*. They leave the *giving* to be done by the men in the trenches. It may be more pleasant to get than to give, but when we have to move on — and we've all got to, whether at the age of twenty in the trenches or at that of seventy from gout — the boot will be on the other leg. The inward satisfaction that it may give a lady to know that she is perfectly dressed, or the dinner hog to know that his belly is full, and that he has a secret store of food which the authorities can't get at, does n't last as long as

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that which the man has who has done his duty, and this gives no indigestion.

The other day I heard a story which seemed to me very pathetic, and which I will tell you. A friend of mine travelled north with a man who had lost a leg, and entered into conversation with him. The man said: "The worst of it all is that I shall never have a little home of my own, and I shall never have anybody to care for me." My friend said: "How do you make that out? Your losing a leg would not make any difference." The soldier replied: "I thought so once, but I don't now. In the hospital that I have just come from there lay in the cot next to mine a man called Jem McLean, who had lost a hand and foot, but did not seem to mind, his only regret being that he could not go back to have another go at the Boches. He was just the merriest fellow you ever met; he was the life of the whole ward and always kept us amused, and his laugh was the most cheering one you ever heard. He was always talking of his girl who was going to

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marry him, and singing her praises. One afternoon, when he was asleep, a young lady came into the room and asked to see Jem McLean. I pointed him out to her, and she woke him up and said: 'I heard you were wounded, and have come to see you, Jem. What have they done to you?' He said: 'I am wounded, and badly; I have lost a hand and a foot.' She seemed horrified, and said very little for another five minutes. Then she looked at him and said: 'I may as well tell you, once and for all, that when I marry I shall marry a whole man, and not a bit of one.' Jem McLean died that night." When I heard this story I thought of the song you used to sing: "Oh, Lucky Jim!"

In answer to your second question, the fact is continually being brought home, that whilst a portion of the nation is fighting for all that England holds dear, and is undergoing the most terrible ordeals, many of the remainder seem still hardly alive to the fact that we are at war. The other day I heard a young lady say that she consid-

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ered the war an "awful bore," and that she hoped that it would soon be over. I know another lady who said that she had to have a chicken killed every second day, because her little Pekinese would not thrive on anything but chicken's breast! I hear of extravagant entertainments, and of nightly dancing at public places. These things may be harmless enough in themselves, and in normal times nothing could be said against them; but the atmosphere is not that which should obtain when the greatest nations in the world are fighting for their lives. Youngsters home on leave certainly require some amusement, and it is good that they should forget the horrors of the trenches, but it is not well that when they come from the terrible realities which they have lived in, they should go to the other extreme and be dragged into frivolity.

It is a true adage which says men are what women make them, and I think that when men return from the front for a short spell, and are naturally in a very highly

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strung and malleable state of mind, women could do better with them than by appealing to their love of champagne and of waltzing. I don't say that these things are wrong, but that at the present moment they are out of place. The woman or girl who is worth her salt can do so much good if she only knows how. She can do more to inspire a man and give him high ideals than all the preachers in the world, and her object should be to talk to the man who is going to the front as she would like to feel she had talked to him if she heard he had fallen soon after his return.

I have just heard that a few weeks ago an old acquaintance of mine, Lady A——, gave a dance, the ostensible reason for her giving it being to amuse her son Jack, who, she hoped, would be at home with some of his friends. As a matter of fact, Jack had always avoided dances, but his sister Sibyl seemed to think that two years of the trenches would have altered his views with regard to them. She, as you know, was engaged to be married to Ian McNeill,

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Jack's captain. Both McNeill's and Jack's leaves were stopped at the last moment. The dance was a merry one, and ended in the morning with bacon and eggs. None of Jack's friends turned up, but their absence was made up for by other men, who were doing work of some sort at home and most of whom had not been at the front at all. Sibyl A—— was in boisterous spirits, and looked very well. There was a trench raid that night. Ian McNeill was killed and Jack A—— was left wounded on the enemy's wire; they heard him shouting for many hours, but when they brought him in the next night he was dead. There are times for all things. This is our National Lent. Let us wait for the dances until after our Easter.

You will remember that in 1806 Napoleon defeated the Prussians at the battles of Jena and Auerstädt, and that in three weeks Prussia was on her knees and absolutely conquered.

Soon after this, under the guidance of Scharnhorst and other leaders of Prussian

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thought, the “Tugendbund,” or bond of virtue, was formed; that is to say, the nation went into penance, gave itself up to making a cult of the primitive virtues of patience, sobriety, chastity, thrift, hardihood, and courage, and made up its mind to eschew all that was frivolous until it had reëstablished its place in Europe. It succeeded in doing this so well that in 1814 it was able to take a leading share in the overthrow of Napoleon, and in 1815 played an historic part at Waterloo. It is, I consider, up to us to take a leaf out of the Prussian book, and until we do so, and until the whole nation takes the war seriously, we do not deserve to win. We are capable of winning, but it will not be in a hack canter, but all out by a head.

Your affectionate father,

“X. Y. Z.”

V

ON BILLETS AND CARE OF THE MEN

October 15, 1916

MY DEAR DICK, —

In your last letter you say that as the short winter days are approaching time often hangs heavily on your hands, and that, especially in billets in a small town, it is hard to find occupation when the hours of work are over. I sympathise in this respect both with you and with your men.

I will talk first of your men, as they must be your first consideration. Always remember that you exist for them, and not they for you. You belong to the Platoon; not it to you. I remember hearing a Commanding Officer smartly taken to task for somewhat ostentatiously talking of “my Battalion” instead of the “Battalion which I command.” It is your duty to do everything in your power to obtain

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reasonable recreation and amusement for your men. The majority of them are not accustomed to reading for long hours at a stretch, and when they are off duty will get into mischief if no reasonable way of employing their leisure hours be open to them. "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." Try to rig up ranges where miniature ammunition can be fired in the evening, and institute pool-shooting and competitions. Try to raise a few pairs of boxing-gloves, and don't be above putting them on yourself and having a bout. Men love an officer who enters into their sports with them. If time admits of it, start a company football team. Take an interest in helping the Soldiers' Institute, and always give a hand to the Y.M.C.A., which is usually excellently run. If you can obtain a room for your men where they can write, and also procure some literature for them, they will all appreciate it very much. If there are no counter-attractions and no places where they can spend their evenings in warmth and comfort, they will

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probably all go to the public-houses or to the canteen — and small blame to them.

The greatest cause of drunkenness is treating, for many misguided people think that they are displaying their patriotism by rendering His Majesty's soldiers incapable. The use of the gallon measure in the canteen is also conducive to drunkenness. Four men go to the canteen together; one orders a gallon from which they all drink, the others later on also each order a gallon, with the result that each man has by the end of the evening had a whole gallon. The sporting chance of a man being able to get a little more than his share seems to have a fascination, for had each man gone in and ordered his own drink he would probably have paid for a quart and this would have sufficed him. At all events, I know that the abolition of the gallon pot in certain canteens very much decreased drunkenness.

Once, in India, at the station which I was commanding, there was suddenly a considerable increase in crime, and this

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was undoubtedly due to certain objectionable performances which had lately been opened in the station, and with which it was difficult to deal. I mentioned this fact to the manager of the Y.M.C.A., who happened to be a particularly astute and energetic Yankee. His reply to me was: "I think I can deal with that all right by putting on an absolutely first-class entertainment that I can get hold of, and I'll make your men so comfortable, and amuse them so well, that the place you are talking of will be broke, for none of them will go to it whilst my show is on." He was as good as his word.

Religious people with the best of intentions not infrequently drive men out of the regimental and other institutes. Neither you nor I should like the walls of the Naval and Military or the "Rag" to be festooned with tracts, but this is what is sometimes done in the case of the institutes, which should be regarded as the men's clubs. You will remember the story of the old lady who had a parrot which used to repeat

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a large number of texts, and who insisted on lending the bird to her nephew to put into the barrack-room to convert his men. After an absence of a couple of months she sent for the parrot, which swore at her so horribly that it was for ever banished from her presence. The tracts hung up on the walls would, if they could, often blush at what they hear, but they certainly do no good, and they do not prevent a man telling an obscene story, though the fact of the text staring him in the face makes his obscenity worse. I am all in favour of there being a side room, where any man who wishes to do so can have a private talk with the clergyman; but it should be a rule that in the public room no person in authority speaks to any man on religious matters unless the man himself starts the subject. My experience has been that where this rule is not observed the best men — i.e., those men who are not hypocrites, and who prefer freedom to a slightly cheaper meal — will desert the institute and go to the public-house or canteen.

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In order to help a man you must put yourself in his place, and look at things from his point of view; not as you think that his point of view ought to be, but as it really is.

If you start from false premises you cannot do much good. Our object should always be to raise the ideals of those whom we can influence; but whilst having this object in view we must bear in mind that what would be a comparatively high ideal for a sinner would be a come-down on the part of a saint, and if you demand too much from those who are not used to the best, you always run the chance of choking them off altogether. Do not pitch your note too high, or you will do no good, for your men, although they are capable of understanding good, straight, manly conduct, appreciate it, and can be induced to heighten their ideals a little, always look with suspicion at any one who overdoes the conversion business.

I heard an Ejaw on the River Niger, who was accused of being a cannibal, reply,

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“My father eat man. I no eat man, but I eat dog.” He evidently thought he had gone up one; it is to be hoped that his son will draw the line at pig. You would be more likely to improve the ordinary highwayman by telling him stories of Claude Duval than by preaching esoteric Buddhism.

It is only right that you, who have had the many advantages which you have had, should demand a much higher standard from yourself than you do from others, but “don’t look too good, nor talk too wise,” or you’ll spoil it all.

I often think that life is rather like a ride to hounds. There are a few who can take a line of their own over a stiff country, and negotiate all the fences satisfactorily. There are others who, having got a lead, are able to follow over the same fences; and again others who, knowing their capabilities to be modest, think it wiser to take a more circuitous route. Some stick to the road and go a long way round, but get there eventually. An un-

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ambitious course is the best for the man who has little nerve and a bad horse; for were he to try to ride his own line he would probably get hung up at a stiff fence, lose much time, and eventually have to go round by the road. The course which is best for one man is not necessarily the best for another differently constituted; but the man who, having a good horse, sticks to the road when he could have gone across country, is not much of a fellow.

We are an extraordinary mixture of good and bad, but most of us are ready to do either what is good or bad so long as it is not disagreeable and is at hand, and, having taken a certain course once, are more likely to take it again the second time; and it is up to you to see that harmless occupations are provided to amuse your men in their leisure hours and keep them out of mischief.

There is another point I should like to touch on before closing on the subject of the care of your men in billets and in the barrack-room. There are many ways in

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which the so-called upper classes have a very great deal to learn from Tommy Atkins; but there are others, and one of them is language, in which they should not emulate him, though I am sorry to say that sometimes they do. The men are undoubtedly addicted to the use of bad, and often disgusting, language. This language does no good, and is usually objectless, and as the same adjectives are used in front of every substantive it cannot be claimed that any special point is emphasised, while all that can be said of its use is that it is a revolting habit. I know that the filthiest language is often used by good, honest men who mean nothing by it, but the constant use of disgusting, and sometimes blasphemous, expressions cannot but have a degrading effect. Although in conversation with each other the men are in the habit of using such language, they never do so when speaking to a superior, and this fact speaks volumes.

Once when I was commanding a battalion in Ireland, during a pause in operations

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at some manœuvres, we were halted on a beautiful hill, when I heard the following conversation: "I say, Bill, what a b—— view!" Bill's reply was, "I call it a pretty b—— view!" The other said, "What a pretty b—— view for a b—— photographer on a b—— fine day!" This conversation is quite illustrative. The men were simply admiring the view; but, from force of habit, when speaking to a comrade, had to insert the least objectionable of their adjectives in front of their substantives. A good deal can be done by officers who join in the men's games telling them that if they do not moderate their language they will be warned off the ground; but what is absolutely essential is example, and if officers, as I know sometimes to be the case, adopt unsavoury epithets from the men's vocabulary, no amount of precept will make up for this example.

Now, as regards yourself. Never waste your time. Either work, play, or sleep, but don't idle or loaf. Avoid standing about the Mess or local club, gossiping or

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doing nothing. You must, of course, read the newspaper to keep yourself to a certain extent up to date, but do not waste too much time over it. If you look at a newspaper which you have not read, and which is a week old, how extraordinarily little there is in it which you care to read, and how little of to-day's paper will be worth recollecting a week hence! I am not going to undertake to give you advice as to what books to read, but endeavour to keep in your pocket some book or notes on points on which you wish to contemplate, or which you desire to commit to memory, so that if you have half an hour to wait anywhere, you can occupy your time. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," and I want you to amuse yourself, but don't help time to hang heavy on your hands by doing nothing.

Your affectionate father,

"X. Y. Z."

VI

ON THE ART OF COMMAND

November 1, 1916

MY DEAR DICK, —

Many thanks for your last letter.

There is indeed a great art in knowing how to command. No man can command others who has not himself learned to obey.

This idea is, I think, brought out in the Prince of Wales's motto, "Ich dien" (I serve). I have no doubt that you will remember that amongst your masters at school there were some whom no self-respecting boy could help "cheeking," and who could never maintain discipline, although they were always punishing, whereas there were others who never punished, who always had their forms in perfect order, but to whom nobody dreamt of being impertinent. It is the same in the Army. Some Commanding Officers obtain cheerful obedience to their commands,

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whereas others find it difficult to get any orders carried out, and are generally unpopular into the bargain. You have met some, and you will meet more men of each type. Try to analyse why one man is willingly obeyed and another is not. Do this, not with the object of picking holes, but in order that you yourself may learn to acquire the art which the one possesses and the other lacks. Avoid giving any orders which are unnecessary. Avoid giving orders which are irksome. Before giving orders, whether regarding the tactical situation or dealing with matters in the lines, very carefully consider what their effect will be. Never give an order which you cannot enforce. It is better to cancel an order than to allow it to be disregarded. Always see that your order is properly given, and in a form which cannot cause offence. If you ever have to convey an order given by a superior to another, be most careful that you deliver it correctly and politely. It is possible that the order you bring is an unwelcome one, but its

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purport will be rendered less unpalatable if it be tactfully conveyed; and as your object should be to have the command you have brought cheerfully obeyed, it is your duty to do what you can to bring about this end.

Always be particularly careful to avoid sarcasm in dealing with your subordinates. A good telling off often does a man good, but sarcasm invariably leaves a bad taste in his mouth. Do everything in your power to check domineering and bullying, but at the same time be careful to uphold authority.

The man whom I have always pitied most is the lance-corporal. It is not to be expected that he should always be a paragon in the way of tact, and he may sometimes try to pay off old scores by means of his newly fledged authority, but, on the other hand, if any man feels himself aggrieved and annoyed with life generally his most ordinary way of expressing it is to assault the lance-corporal. Fortunately there is not in our Army a tithe of the

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bullying which takes place in the armies of many other nations; but, all the same, most of the insubordination which does take place is the direct consequence of superfluous and thoughtless orders given in an annoying manner to a hot-tempered man. What we should aim at is cheery and willing obedience, and not the slavish fulfilment of the letter of the order. When you have received an order which your Platoon is to carry out, I am certain that you resent being told exactly what to do, but prefer to perform it your own way. Do as you would be done by, and do not interfere too much with your Section commanders. It is possible that on the first or second occasion that a certain scheme had to be carried out, it might have been better done in the actual circumstances as the Captain knew them to be, if he had given detailed orders as to how your Platoon was to act, and if you had done the same with regard to your Sections; but by this method neither you nor your Section commanders would have learned much,

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and the object of the exercise, which was to instruct the Company, would not have been fulfilled. The principal object of all tactical instruction is to train officers and men to act when they have no superior on the spot to refer to, and in order to fulfil this object you must always be very careful not to encroach on the sphere of your subordinates. In the old days in the British Army the Colonel and the Adjutant used between them to run the whole Battalion, but now the double Company should be as independent a unit as a Battery of Artillery or a Squadron of Cavalry, and it is a fine command for a young officer, and an excellent training for a higher position. Always encourage initiative and love of responsibility on the part of your subordinates. If an officer or N.C.O. whom you know to be doing his best takes measures which are not in your opinion well adapted to meet the situation, point out to him his mistakes, and tell him what he ought to have done, but do not censure him severely or sharply; if you do you will run the risk

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of destroying his initiative, and he will very likely on the next occasion do nothing at all.

It is right that the Captain should call up the Section commanders as well as the Platoon commanders, when he criticises the way an exercise has been performed. A Section commander may any day find himself in command of a Platoon, and the criticism of an officer's tactical handling of his command in front of his subordinates is likely to be instructive, and is quite unobjectionable so long as the manner in which it is conveyed is friendly; but anything approaching a censure must never be given in the presence of a junior, and if you openly blame your N.C.O.'s in front of the men you entirely undermine their authority.

There is a great art in writing orders, but as this forms a regular branch of military study I shall not here do more than touch on it. Whenever possible, if you have an important order to give, put it in writing. I do not tell you to do this in order that you may have a record to save

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yourself if things go wrong — your object must be to prevent things going wrong or being misunderstood — but to ensure that you have clearly stated your intentions. You are less likely to give an ambiguous order in writing than by word of mouth and in action this precaution is especially necessary. If an order has been misunderstood, before blaming the recipient be quite sure that it was clearly issued. I have, more than once, heard orders given which, if I had been the recipient, I should not have understood. Whenever you give a verbal order make the recipient repeat it to you. Do this not only to ensure that he has understood the order, but also to make certain that your order does not admit of more than one interpretation. It often happens with verbal orders that, in the excitement of an engagement, what the commander meant to order and what he has ordered are two different things, and the possibility of this taking place must be guarded against. Orders must be short and to the point. Everything superfluous

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should be omitted, and the man who has to execute them should be given as free a hand as circumstances admit of. Orders dealing with a definite situation may go into greater detail than those which deal with a situation which is only probable and not definite. In the latter case instructions will usually take the place of orders. If you are ever in doubt as to whether an order still holds good, ask yourself: Was the officer responsible for the order in possession of the main facts as I now know them to be when he issued it? If he was, there can be no question that it is your duty to carry it out; but if you are certain that he had no knowledge of some material fact, and if your not carrying out the order does not let in your pal, it is not incumbent on you to sacrifice yourself and your men.

Orders take a long time to permeate: the Army sends them to the Corps, the Corps to the Division, the Division to the Brigade, the Brigade to the Battalion, and the Battalion to the Company. Every office through which these orders pass expunges

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certain parts, which do not refer to the next subordinate formation to which they are sent, and amplifies other parts. The art of quickly writing orders is one of the most important which a Staff Officer has to learn, but important orders take hours to write. You may in our Army of to-day always feel quite certain that the Staff start writing their orders the very second they receive orders from higher authority on which to base their own, and that they are *not* either comfortably eating their dinners or wasting their time while you are impatiently awaiting the receipt of orders. Regimental Officers often either do not know, or fail to appreciate, the difficulties with which the Staff have to contend. It is a good plan to send out an anticipatory order when it seems probable that the whole orders will take long to write: for instance, the Division can make up its mind in five minutes that the 200th Brigade will lead, and that it will continue the march in such and such a direction, passing certain cross roads at 6 A.M., and the

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receipt of this order will probably ensure a quiet night's rest for the Battalion. Always avoid giving an order which may afterwards have to be cancelled. Remember the sequence: order, counter-order, disorder. Counter-orders should be avoided, as they try men's confidence. The addition or omission of one word will often make all the difference to the comfort and well-being of your subordinates, and it is your duty to look after these essentials to the utmost of your ability; so lose no opportunity of learning to write good and concise orders.

Your affectionate father,

“X. Y. Z.”

VII

ON TRAINING

December 1, 1916

MY DEAR DICK, —

In your last letter you tell me that your Division will not be going out for a couple of months, and this will give you a little extra time to learn your work before you go.

When I joined, an officer used not to be looked upon as fit for anything until he had three or four years' service; but in these days of intensive training as much is expected of him after three or four months. By working harder more can be learnt, except that it is hard to condense into a few months the training in discipline which should be ingrained in a man and become part of his nature. With regard to the work actually in front of you, I have noticed a tendency in the New Army to look on musketry as of secondary

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importance, and on bombing and bayonet fighting as the chief subjects in which an infantryman should be proficient. It is difficult to get exact statistics, especially as a bullet wound may be inflicted either by a rifle or by a machine gun; but I do not think that I am far out in stating that during this last offensive, for every twenty-five or thirty of our men who have been admitted to hospital suffering from bullet wounds, there have been only about two admissions on account of wounds inflicted by bombs, and not even an average of one on account of bayonet wounds. It must also be borne in mind that when the sniper hits he generally kills, and the dead are not admitted to hospital.

This in itself should prove to you the importance of musketry, for I am sure that our infantry fire is not worse than that of the Germans. Your first efforts should be to make the whole of your Platoon fairly good shots and able to fire fifteen rounds a minute with moderate accuracy. It must never be forgotten that it was the fire of

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the Infantry of our highly trained Expeditionary Force which, time after time, checked the Germans during the early part of the war. You cannot devote too much energy or trouble to musketry. In the short time you have in front of you, you must be satisfied with the results aimed at in the last paragraph as far as the majority of your men are concerned, but you should endeavour to train five per cent of the best of them as snipers, and any extra ammunition you can get hold of should be expended on their careful training. We have now to do more in weeks than in the old days was expected of us in as many months, so we must cut our cloth according to our measure, and cannot aim at having a large number of first-class marksmen.

When you lecture, try to make what you say interesting, and, if you have the opportunity, every now and then interlard it with some illustration of what you mean. Uneducated men cannot remember a lot of hard facts unless they have pegs to hang

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them on. Lectures given by officers and non-commissioned officers are frequently not only extremely dull, but they are often almost devoid of useful information. An enormous amount has to be pumped into the men in a short period, and no time should be wasted on platitudes. You can generally tell whether what you are saying is being taken in by the men, by the look on their faces. Always avoid terms which they do not thoroughly understand, and put yourself on the level of their intelligence. Don't talk what is Greek to them. Always endeavour to get your subordinates to follow your line of thought, and as far as possible give them your reasons for what you do. This is the way to make intelligent soldiers, capable of acting on their own responsibility.

When you are route-marching ask the men questions such as, "If my horse should cast a shoe, where could I get him shod?" "Is there any water near here?" etc., etc. This will ensure the men's keeping their eyes open and telling you on the

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next occasion of the forge, and of the stream over which you marched. Constantly think out for yourself little tactical situations such as, "How should I put that house in a state of defence?" or, "What would be the best place for a piquet?"

Before putting these questions to your subordinates discuss them with some senior if you are not sure of the best solution. But the very fact that you are constantly putting to yourself such little problems will render you much quicker at properly solving them when the time comes for you to do so in earnest.

Remember the enormous holding power of your Lewis guns. Also remember, if time does not admit of your providing cover for the whole of your Platoon, that you can generally, by using intensive labour, get cover for your Lewis gun. By intensive labour I mean telling off two or three men to one tool and letting a man dig as if he were running a hundred yards' race for, say, a couple of minutes, and

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when he is tired having another ready to snatch the tool from him.

Think out little fire problems, as, for example, what sort of fire you ought to employ on such and such an occasion? Should combined sights be used? Would you fire straight at the object? Would you fire at some auxiliary mark to get your range? Would you on the occasion in question open fire at some spot before the enemy arrived there in order to check your range? Would you open fire directly you see him, or would you let him come close up to you before disclosing your fire? There are occasions when each of the above methods would be the right, and all others the wrong, one to pursue. Continually ask yourself such questions, and carefully think out the answers, so that if you meet with a similar problem on service you are meeting an old friend to which you know the answer. Let no little problem be new to you.

Unless conditions have very much changed when you go to the front, the

British Army will still be in the trenches, and you will be apt to consider that warfare means trench warfare instead of its being only a phase which we hope will soon be over, as it can never lead to great decisions. We know to our cost the great losses which have been inflicted by German machine guns, if well placed and available at the right moment. I lay stress on their being available at the right moment, as, unless good cover be provided for them, the guns themselves are usually buried and the detachment killed before they have a chance to come into action. My point in mentioning this is to call your notice to the immense importance of providing adequate cover for machine guns and their detachments.

There are a good many things which you can learn only when you have got to the front, and with regard to which a few days' experience is worth any amount of theoretical teaching. There are, however, others which you can learn just as well at home as in the trenches, and, in fact, a great

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deal better, for a wet dugout is not an ideal place in which to imbibe theory. Every officer, and really every senior non-commissioned officer, should be able thoroughly to read a map, to orientate himself on it, and to understand the shape of the ground from the contours. He should also be able, without a second's thought, to indicate any point on a squared map by means of quadrilaterals. This can be learnt in five minutes, and is absolutely essential; but, all the same, it is wonderful how many officers do not know the simple method which is now in vogue.

It is always possible that you may on any day find yourself in command of a Company, and you must do all you can to qualify yourself for commands higher than that in which you are acting. You must always remember that you cannot properly command your own front unless you roughly know what is going on on the fronts of your neighbours. You must always fight as if you were one of a team, and not as if you were carrying on an iso-

On Training

lated engagement. Always keep up liaison with the troops on your flanks. This is especially necessary if your command is on the flank of a higher formation.

If you have to deliver an attack, always be careful not to charge too soon. Heavily laden men, even when working over hard ground, cannot charge for more than twenty or thirty yards, and if the word is given prematurely the consequence is that they come in, not in line, but pumped and in a ragged formation, which the enemy, if he stand his ground, will have no difficulty in defeating. Make your men's feet your first care.

There are, of course, thousands of things which you have to learn, and all that I have tried to do is to call your attention to a few important points which I know from experience are often neglected, or about which there is sometimes ambiguity on the part of young officers. You should always bear in mind the possibility of your being placed in some position in which the fate of a battle, and that of an empire,

A General's Letters to his Son

may depend upon the knowledge, courage, efficiency, and fitness of yourself and of your command, and your one and only object at present should be to prepare yourself and the men entrusted to you for such an emergency. It would not be the first time on which the evenly balanced scales in battle have been weighed down by the action of a Subaltern and his men, and history repeats itself.

Remember what we are up against; remember the glorious traditions of this Regiment which you are joining; remember your name and the sword which your great-grandfather wore at Waterloo, which now is yours, and live up to them.

Noblesse oblige.

Your affectionate father,

“X. Y. Z.”

VIII

ON MONEY

December 15, 1916

MY DEAR DICK, —

In your last letter you tell me that you lent a brother officer nearly all you had at the bank in order to enable him to pay a gambling debt. If you are sufficiently fond of him to risk losing the money in order to do him a good turn, or if you think the lesson which he has learnt will keep him straight in future, you have performed a good and kind action, and one for which I should be the last to blame you; but in lending money you should be prepared to look on it as a gift. The worst of lending your money is that in doing so you often lose your friend, for either the lender presses for repayment, which the borrower takes amiss, or the borrower avoids his old friend, being unable to forget the dross he owes him. What is it that Whyte Melville.

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says? It is something like this: "Money lost, little lost; friends lost, much lost; honour lost, all lost." Stop when you have lost the money. Don't gamble with the others. What you have is your own to do what you like with, but you must never back another man's bill unless you are fully prepared to pay up should he not be able to meet it; and on no account whatever have any transactions with a money-lender. It is very seldom that by doing so you even do any good to the man who is in trouble. You tell me that on this occasion your friend played poker with men who were much richer than he was, and, having lost more than he could afford, ran after his money and gambled to try to get square. This is, of course, the most ordinary way for a gambler to be ruined. Very few have the courage to cut their losses, but go on playing, hoping by a coup to get everything back, and only succeed in getting farther into the fire. You must always remember that what is gambling to one man is not gambling to another. Playing

bridge for five shillings a hundred would be rank gambling on the part of a Subaltern with only his pay, whereas ten times those points would not be gambling in the case of a rich man. If you do play cards — and it would be ridiculous to advise you never to play a rubber of bridge — always avoid playing with anybody who cannot, without in any way feeling it, afford to lose at the points at which you are playing.

I hate gambling at cards, which, as you know, have little attraction for me; but to play for points your friend cannot afford to lose is doubly disagreeable, for to win from him is really worse than to lose, and there is little pleasure in playing a game at which one would rather lose than win. The same principles apply to the race-course, except that few people have any compunction in winning from a bookie; but no man can enjoy looking at a race on which he has put more than he can afford to lose, and in the long run betting is a mug's game. Both layers and backers cannot get fat, and you have only

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to look at the ring to see that the layers do so.

It requires great restraint on the part of a man to be able to associate continually with those of much greater means without getting into debt. If the earthenware pots float down the stream with the brass ones we all know what must happen to them.

Fortunately, during this time of war, there are comparatively few calls on the purse of a young officer, and he ought to be able to manage on his pay if he is strictly economical; but, all the same, I have heard of very many cases of dishonoured cheques and other dishonourable money transactions of a sort which were hardly ever heard of in the Old Army, in spite of the fact that it was, generally speaking, composed of poor men. We are all inclined to

“Compound for sins we are inclined to,
By damning those we have no mind to,” —

and have points on which we are more inclined to be extravagant than we are on others which do not appeal to us; but I

don't think I can recollect a single case of a man being brought to ruin through keeping a polo pony or a hunter more than he could, strictly speaking, afford, though I have known hundreds who have gone under on account of gambling, of women, or of drinking; and I will warrant that, in nine cases out of ten, one of these causes was at the bottom of the dishonoured cheque.

It is, of course, incumbent on an officer always to be well turned out, and it also behoves him to avoid, when in uniform, restaurants and seats in theatres and railway carriages, in which he is likely to be brought into close contact with his men, — familiarity breeds contempt, and is bad for discipline, — but it is not incumbent on him to spend much money on his food or to drink expensive wines.

We must cut our cloth according to our measure, but sometimes are apt to find it difficult to differentiate between luxuries and necessities. I always like the story of the nobleman in the fairy-tale who, after a

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long minority, succeeded to an impoverished estate, but inherited two gifts which had been bequeathed to him by a fairy godmother. These were a purse which was always full when the purchase made from it was necessary, and a sword which always brought victory when the hand which used it was in the right. On becoming of age the young nobleman bought clothes, some horses and carriages, and did up his house; the money for all this was forthcoming, as all these were necessary. He also killed robbers and rescued maidens with his sword; but when he spent money in carousals, and picked an unjust quarrel, he found his purse empty and the sword would not fight for him. It is hard to draw the line as to what is necessary and what is extravagance. The best rule for a soldier is to have few wants; the less he can do with the better, and especially do these words apply to this crisis. I remember as a small boy learning in my Latin grammar, “*Effodiuntur opes irritamenta malorum,*” against which was the translation, “Riches,

the incentives to evil, are dug out of the earth.” And still the whole world seeks them. As Robert Marshall says, money is the only responsibility which humanity has never shirked, and this in spite of what we have heard with regard to the rich man and the camel at the eye of a needle. It is an extraordinary thing, but a fact, that the possession of money often turns a generous man into a miser. We most of us know those who, when they had an allowance of a hundred a year, were willing to share it with anybody, but who, after they had come into a fortune, seemed to count their sixpences. I have known some generous rich men, but I have known proportionately many more generous poor ones. I always like the story of the man who had two sons, to each of whom he gave a moderate allowance. One of them always lived on it, and had to spare. The other always outran it, and tried to borrow from his brother, who had little sympathy with his extravagance. When the father died, contrary to all expectations, he left the whole

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of his money to the son for whom he had already paid up so often, giving as his reason that he knew that this son would always be hard up; but that the other, although he left him nothing, would before long be rich.

The oath which the young Sikh has to take is a fine one. It is to worship steel and not gold and never to turn his face on a friend nor his back on an enemy. With him this is a matter of caste. Yet the object of most men seems to be to get as much as possible at the smallest price, and this rule holds good, whether the coin be of metal or of such things as sincerity, unselfishness, and love; in short, to get gold and give silver. They have their reward. Others have given gold and got lead. They have their reward. There are many graves in France.

Your affectionate father,

“X. Y. Z.”

IX

ON WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING AGAINST

January 1, 1917

MY DEAR DICK, —

You ask me whether I think war was unavoidable. My answer is, "Yes." Germany, headed by Prussia (for the aggressive spirit is really more Prussian than German), has for many years been determined to make a bid for the supremacy of the world, and in order to achieve this purpose it was quite inevitable that she must come into conflict with England. In order to achieve her ambition two courses were open to Germany. One was first to tackle England on the chance of France and Russia not supporting her, and the other was to attack France and Russia at a time when she believed it unlikely that England would join them, and, having subdued them and fortified herself on the Belgian and Dutch coasts, then to chal-

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lenge England, which she knew to be the greatest stumbling-block in her path to world-wide domination. She adopted the latter course, and had we not gone to war when we did the fates of France and Russia would have been sealed, and also our own a few years later. For the last fifty years German policy has been deliberate, and its ambitions have become greater as decade followed decade. As little as possible has been left to chance. In 1866 war was forced on Austria, and she was defeated in six weeks. At the same time a quarrel was picked with Hanover, which, separating, as it did, Prussia proper from the Rhine provinces, had long been a Naboth's vineyard to Prussia; it was conquered, and from that time it has formed a part of the kingdom of the Hohenzollerns. Since the Franco-Prussian War, during which the King of Prussia was made German Emperor, the importance of Germany has every year increased. The direction of the affairs of Germany has always been in the hands, not of party politicians, but of

On What we are Fighting Against

statesmen who thought far ahead, had certain definite objects in view, and who, as Clausewitz says, looked on war simply as a continuance of diplomacy by other means. The only bad mistakes that the Germans have made have been in psychology. In this respect they have, during the last few years, made some grievous errors, having quite misunderstood the mental attitude of other nations.

A Prussian is a tremendous believer in brute force and in the necessity of inspiring his enemies with a sense of fear. As you know, I have from the time I left Harrow been a great deal in Germany, and have had exceptional opportunities of studying the people and also the Army.

The Prussian proper was and is feared, but hated, by other Germans. How well I remember in the late seventies the house of Baron H——, in a town in the province of Hanover! He was of British descent, but had commanded a Hussar Regiment in the Hanoverian Army, and had with his Hussars broken three Prussian squares at

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Langensalza, the last battle the Hanoverians had for their freedom. Into this house no Prussian officer was allowed to enter, and on a prominent table in his drawing-room was placed a Prussian helmet which had written on it the following words from a well-known speech by Bismarck, "Macht geht vor Recht durch Blut und Eisen," which, as you know, means, "Might counts more than right through blood and iron." These are Prussian principles. I also remember Countess K——, the wife of a Colonel of Hanoverian Dragoons, who had also fought against the Prussians in the same battle. When war broke out with France the Prussians tried to seize all prominent Hanoverians, and as Countess K—— refused to disclose the whereabouts of her husband, she was put into prison by the Prussians and was treated as an ordinary criminal, although she had a baby with her, who died in prison. They were, even then, neither over-nice nor over-squeamish in their methods. Talking of Baron H—— reminds me of wars of other

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days. In another war he had gone out of his way to kill a standard-bearer in order to capture the standard, and his conscience afterwards pricked him for having taken the life of this man in order to gratify his pride, so he instituted inquiries as to the man's identity, and pensioned his widow for the rest of her life.

Stories of old wars teem with picturesque incidents, and especially with the chivalry always displayed by our whilom enemies and gallant Allies of to-day. No man should bear an old opponent ill-will as long as he fought him fair and square, but it is hard to forgive a blow below the belt.

The officer class in Germany has an elaborate code of honour with regard to duelling, but, except in this respect, the Germans have no idea of fair-play, and only enjoy a fight when they are two or three to one. As a boy I had personal experience of this.

The following story is illustrative: An Englishman, who is now high up in our Service, previous to entering the Army

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was studying German at a small town, and one day was quietly skating when three German students, seeing an Englishman alone, attacked him with clubbed skates. He defended himself for some time, but eventually quitted the ice and ran, followed by his opponents. He was a good runner, and after going half a mile so as to get his antagonists well separated, he turned, and laid them all out, one after the other, two of them being laid up for three months. The authorities wanted to send him to prison, but a friendly high personage intervened and he got off. Individually, the Germans are not a match for our men, but in disciplined bodies they are, as we well know, very formidable antagonists. Prince Hohenlohe in his "Letters of Cavalry," written after the Franco-Prussian War, states that it is in disorder that the French are most dangerous; and a German officer of high rank, who was in the Franco-Prussian War, admitted to me that in wood-fighting or in any place where the fighting spirit of the individual man came

On What we are Fighting Against

into play, the Germans were not a match for the French, although in disciplined bodies they at that time always beat them. All this is being proved over and over again in the present war. Another thing which makes the Germans so formidable as a nation is their industry. A friend of mine, who was in a commercial town in the Far East, asked how it was that the Germans had increased so much in prosperity. It was evening when he asked the question, and all Englishmen had long before gone to their amusements or their club. The man to whom he put the question pointed to the windows of some German firms, where lights were still burning, and said, "That is why."

German education is most thorough, and so is the recruit's training; it is wonderful what the recruits who join in October know by February, when they are inspected by the Divisional Commander. I have heard what were stupid yokels questioned, and have been astounded at their answers. Among other things they had been taught

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to express themselves clearly, and had learnt how to direct one intelligibly to any place they themselves knew. It is very seldom indeed that you can get an English recruit to do this clearly.

The memoirs of Bismarck and other distinguished Germans clearly prove, if proof be necessary, how absolutely unscrupulous they have been in the attainment of their aims. We are fighting about the most industrious, and certainly the most disciplined, nation of modern times. The leaders of the nation have staked everything on victory, for if the Germans be defeated I am convinced that we shall hear no more of Hohenzollerns, of Hapsburgs, or Prussianism, and the people will take terrible revenge. The leaders of the nation know all this much better than we do, and they will fight to the bitter end, for they are fighting with a rope round their necks. But the end is not yet.

You must remember that the German people are, as a whole, particularly gullible, and ready to believe anything which has

On What we are Fighting Against

the official mark on it; the vast majority are firmly convinced of the justice of their cause, and that their "German God" is fighting for them. Their army has, as we know, suffered tremendous losses, but by making use of the populations of the territories they have conquered, by utilising their prisoners of war, and by the organisation of labour in their own country, they have managed to withdraw every man of fighting age from civil pursuits, and to put him in the army. The consequence is that the army numerically is very nearly as strong as it was at the commencement of the war, and is a huge and formidable fighting machine, which, however, as well as the motive force behind it, is founded on materialism and brute force. Force, as stated elsewhere, must be met by force, but the greatest of battle chiefs has declared that the moral is to the physical as three is to one; and *if*, besides equalling him on the material plane, the whole attitude of our people and of our Army gives us a right to claim that as a regenerate

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nation the moral forces are on our side, we shall be invincible and must conquer — but don't forget the "IF." We are n't doing it yet, and time presses.

Your affectionate father,

"X. Y. Z."

X

ON WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR

January 15, 1917

MY DEAR DICK, —

You ask me what I consider the consequences to us of defeat, or of only a partial victory, would be. I will try to answer your question. We are fighting not only for all that makes life worth living for us Englishmen, but also for everything which makes the world a place worth living in. If our victory should be only a partial one, or if we should be compelled to make peace without once and for all crushing Prussianism — by which I mean the party and the spirit which acknowledges no right but might, and is for ever clanking its sword — we should only be postponing the evil day. The war would have to be fought again later on, and would probably be forced on us at a time which best suited our enemy, and when the Allies at present

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fighting for freedom were not all prepared to take up the quarrel. Until either one side or the other is thoroughly defeated, Europe will be an armed camp. I have been very much struck by hearing women, in absolutely different grades of society, say that, although they have everything dear to them fighting, they wish the war to continue until we have an absolute victory, because they so dread the idea of an inconclusive peace, and the whole thing having to be done again. The possibility of our being beaten is too terrible to contemplate, but it is best to look everything in the face. At the commencement of the war we imagined that it would be over well within a year. After it had continued for a year the Germans had not lost, but had added to the territories which they had conquered. When it had lasted two years they had added a great deal more, and now Roumania has also fallen to them. Our position has never been so perilous as now that we are faced with the submarine menace.

On What we are Fighting For

In every step they have been before us. They were prepared when we were unprepared. They have always appreciated the situation, and acted according to its needs before we have done so. At an early date they took steps to control their supplies of food, and later they mobilised labour. In all these things we have followed suit very tardily, and in a very half-hearted manner; in fact, they have throughout out-jockeyed us, and if we are going to win we must sit down and ride for all we are worth.

That we should be defeated seems to us inconceivable, and were we to be so, it is not difficult to imagine what our fate would be, dominated by the power which has shown itself to be barbarous, cruel, and grasping, and without a particle of honour or any regard for treaties or undertakings. The victory of "Kultur" would put back for a thousand years the hands of the clock of true civilisation and progress.

Those who have had anything to do with the native races subject to Germany can testify to the fact that "die Schwarzen,"

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as they invariably call them, are treated more brutally than dogs. I know the case of a prince with an historic name, belonging to a German Cuirassier Regiment, who overstepped even the German bounds, and was awarded penal servitude for brutality to a woman in West Africa.

The Union Jack floats over something like one sixth of the whole earth, and, take it all round, we have ruled our dominions justly and well, and we owe it to the races who are now subject to us not to allow them to fall under the sway of the Junker.

I consider that our newspapers, and public opinion generally, have been much to blame in allowing the impression to gain ground that we were winning the war, and that, although it was costing us a great many lives and a great deal of money, the possibility of defeat was out of the question. Perhaps it has been thought advisable to assume this tone in order to impress the enemy; but whether it has impressed him is open to grave doubt. As regards our

On What we are Fighting For

own people, I think that with all our faults we cannot be accused of chicken-heartedness, and we are not disposed to be cowed by looking danger in the face, but, on the contrary, to fight an uphill battle well is a British characteristic; it is not until the game is nearly lost that the true British spirit comes out. "Nec aspera terrent," which is a Guelph motto, applies to the British race. If, however, he thinks all is well, the Briton is loath to adopt extreme measures or to inconvenience himself unnecessarily. Besides the stupendous issues which I have touched on, we are fighting to preserve the lives and the honour of our defenceless loved ones, for the danger of invasion is not yet over.

Another incentive which men at the front have to do their best is the pride their families at home take in their deeds. If a non-commissioned officer or man gets the Military Medal the whole village feels honoured, and the town which produces a V.C. is prouder than if it had been raised to the rank of a city. On the other hand, the dis-

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grace of the family representative must be very bitterly felt, and it is difficult to imagine the feelings of parents when informed that their son has been shot for desertion or for cowardice. In all times and in all countries an illustrious ancestry, giving high ideals to be lived up to, has proved a great incentive to noble deeds, and in behaving with gallantry himself a man is giving a standard for the future generations of his race to emulate. I believe that in most cases the knowledge which a man has that his decoration will give joy to his family and friends is the greatest pleasure which the award brings. I can imagine the pride of the mother who had eight sons at the front, and also the poor time she gave the other woman who had seven sons, all of whom had avoided going out. For many years our nation has become more luxurious, less industrious, more money-loving, and more pleasure-seeking. Those countries where the inhabitants have been ravished and murdered have awoken from their sleep and are taking the war seriously,

On What we are Fighting For

but no man can learn his lessons by proxy, and we are not yet awake.

Hundreds of millions are yearly being spent on drink. The healthy population of the countryside has decreased, and the slums are congested on account of false conceptions with regard to money-making, which has become the national god. When the eyes of the nation are sufficiently open to see things in their proper perspective, we may be considered fit to win; but we have still to go through that mill which grinds very fine, but is necessary to turn the wheat into flour.

Money and luxury now are everything, and the very population of the country is depending on their sway.

The law of nature is that young people should marry and rear families; now, however, especially in the upper and middle classes, the very classes which can best afford to educate their children, the age of marriage is very much later than it was in the olden days, and consequently families are smaller. This is by no means the

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only cause of small families; a more important reason is that parents wishing to have a "good time" take precautions to ensure that they shall not "be fruitful and multiply." It is said that Napoleon always refused to take notice of a married woman who had no children. He knew what France wanted.

If the result of the war be the raising of the national ideal, it will, in spite of all its horrors and all its sacrifices, prove to be a blessing and not a curse. Ruskin says: "I found, in brief, that all great nations learned their truth of word and strength of thought in war: that they were nourished in war and wasted in peace; taught by war and deceived by peace; trained by war and betrayed by peace; in a word, that they were born in war, and expired in peace." War gives to the men actually taking part in it high ideals; it brings out courage, generosity, and self-sacrifice, and generally brings men up against the realities of life. It is less our soldiers than our people who have their lessons still to learn.

On What we are Fighting For

All our Allies have fought magnificently, and the chief burden of the war of the West rested for a long time on the French; but now everything depends on us English. I have told you what we are fighting for, — namely, everything we hold sacred, — and it is incumbent on us, not only for our own sakes, but for that of the whole world, both present and future, in every way and by using every force that lies in us, spiritual, intellectual, and material, to leave no stone unturned to obtain victory.

Your affectionate father,

“X. Y. Z.”

XI

ON HONOURS AND REWARDS

February 1, 1917

MY DEAR DICK, —

You tell me that your friend Jack has received the Military Cross, and that although he is a good fellow and undoubtedly merited it, Ronald, who deserved a decoration twice as much, did not even receive a mention in dispatches. Except in that it will give great pleasure to his relations, I don't suppose that Jack is much happier than Ronald, if the latter is the man I believe him to be. Ronald knows that he has done his duty, and he further knows that his friends are aware of it. Had he also gained a Military Cross, this Military Cross would not, to the outer world, be distinguishable from any other which had not been so well deserved.

You also remark that it seems that the farther you are away from the firing-line

On Honours and Rewards

the more chance you have of being decorated, and that you hear that junior officers and men in the trenches resent the same decorations, which have been issued to them at the rate of about one to every twenty or thirty casualties, being distributed with a proportionately freer hand to others who have never got much farther than the base. You must remember that the work for which these men have been rewarded is, as a rule, more important for the general well-being of the force than the work of individual men in the trenches, and that this work, as a rule, requires special qualifications. Moreover, many of the men who do not succeed in getting farther than the base would give their eyes to be in the firing-line, though I admit this is not always the case. Nevertheless, I agree with you that it would be much more popular amongst officers and men in fighting formations if some other distinctions besides the V.C. could be reserved for work done in the face of the enemy. I also wish it could be found possible to give every

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man who actually passed one hundred nights in the trenches some distinctive badge of honour. In order to be a hundred nights in the trenches, the Division to which the man in question belonged would, as a rule, have been at least seven or eight months in the line whilst he was present with it, and this means something.

But, after all, what do these decorations really matter? Is it a greater satisfaction to a man to own a little piece of silver or bronze than to know that he has done his duty to the best of his ability? Do you remember the extract from the diary of the German soldier, which appeared in one of our papers, and read as follows? —

Monday. — It rained heavily, and our Lieut. Müller was drunk.

Tuesday. — The English shelled us, and our Lieut. Müller was very drunk.

Wednesday. — The English shelled us more heavily, and our Lieut. Müller was drunk and incapable.

Thursday. — We were ordered to attack. Our Lieut. Müller called out to us from his dugout to advance more rapidly.

Friday. — Nil.

On Honours and Rewards

Saturday. — Nil.

Sunday. — Our Lieut. Müller received the Iron Cross.

The fact that he had so thoroughly deserved it no doubt very much added to the value of “our Lieut. Müller’s” decoration.

It is significant that those decorations which are most prized are usually those of the least intrinsic value. The bay leaf cost even less than the Victoria Cross. What becomes of decorations to obtain which has been some men’s highest ambition?

A friend of mine, who takes a great interest in everything connected with the history of the British Army, has made a collection of medals and now has many thousands. Nearly all of them had been in the hands of pawnbrokers before they found their way to him, although many of them are inscribed with illustrious names.

The following story of the German Emperor was told me by a highly placed German officer who knew him well. The old

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Emperor could always be distinguished from his Staff by the fact that he wore no decoration except the Iron Cross. This simplicity, however, did not suit the gaudy taste of the present Kaiser, and he very much envied the right to wear a certain handsome aiguillette which was worn by nobody but the Emperor's personal Staff, and he objected to being the only plainly dressed man among a glittering assembly. The order decreeing that this aiguillette was only to be worn by the Staff was an ancient one, with which he did not like to tamper, but he was not to be beaten, and on the anniversary of the birthday of the old Emperor, in honour, as he decreed, of the memory of his grandfather, he appointed himself and all his direct descendants in the Crown of Prussia as Aides-de-Camp to the dead Emperor, and from that day he has worn the aiguillette.

These incidents show how valueless an Iron Cross, how ephemeral a medal conferring honour on a family, and how ludicrous the acquisition of a decoration may

On Honours and Rewards

be. The only reward really worth having is the knowledge that you have done your duty, and whether your work be recognised, or whether you be blamed and others get the credit for what you have done, should not worry you as long as you have this knowledge in your heart. Your motive must be to do the best you can for your country and not to play to the gallery in order to obtain a reward. Do not give way to selfish vanity; it is not the acquisition of honours and rewards, but the abnegation of self that has wrought out all that is noble, all that is good, and nearly all that is useful in the world.

The man who does work which comes under the eye of those in high position is likely to receive a decoration. The man who, day after day, and night after night, works unremittingly under shell fire in the trenches, waist-high in water, is much more likely to get a bullet than a mention, but he may have got farther through that mill about which I was talking, and through which all the corn has to go before

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it becomes flour, and he may have learnt and acquired things worth more than decorations. Again, do you think success has made those of your friends to whose lot it has fallen to obtain it pleasanter men to meet? Is it not true that the only men who are not spoilt by it are those who do not care one straw about it? How many of these do you know?

Your affectionate father,

“X. Y. Z.”

XII

ON FACING DEATH

March 1, 1917

MY DEAR DICK, —

You ask me whether I believe in Kismet. It is a difficult question to answer, and one I cannot undertake to discuss in this letter. In many ways I agree with the men who say, "If you are for it, you are for it," and a man who is always trying to save his own skin may be killed by a stray bullet a mile behind the line, or run over at a street crossing in London when he comes home on leave. All the same, a man who is always "asking for it" is sure to get it in the long run. I am fully aware that what I have said is illogical; but without entering into a long discussion, which I have no intention of doing, I cannot better explain myself, though I think I can give you some practical rules to govern your conduct.

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Should you ever be called on to perform a task which looks like spelling certain death, and honour and duty demand your doing it, you must, of course, not hesitate. On the other hand, unless your duty demand it, you should take all ordinary precautions to avoid being shot, remembering that any man who is of value to his country — and all of us are at the present moment of value to our country — and who allows himself to be shot unnecessarily, is doing not a good but a harm to his country, and is performing an unpatriotic act.

There are many sorts of vanity, and perhaps the least inexcusable is a man's pride in his courage; but even this is vanity, and for a man to expose himself unnecessarily on account of vanity, and in order to show how brave he is, is not playing the game. He holds his life in trust for his country, to spend if necessity demands its sacrifice, but not to throw it away. There are, on the other hand, occasions when the necessity of giving an example

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renders it necessary for an officer to run a great risk of being killed, and, if the situation demand it, this risk must be taken. The ruling factor must always be the good of the cause, and you must not forget that a trained officer is not easy to replace, and he should not perform dangerous duties which can equally well be discharged by a private. It may be argued that the man's life is as dear to the man as the officer's is to the officer; but that is not the point at issue. A trained officer is of more value to his country and harder to replace than is the man. Do you throw down a shilling for an article which a penny will buy? I have heard of small patrols consisting of two officers and three men penetrating far into the enemy's lines. These two officers were, without doubt, capable men who could not be spared, and for them to undertake this duty was wrong. If there had been sixty men it would have been justifiable to have sent two officers, but with three men it was not right.

In spite of assertions to the contrary

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that I have often heard made, I do not believe any man likes being under fire, and when a man makes this assertion I am more inclined to doubt his veracity than to admire his courage. I know, however, that some cool, brave men can think as clearly when under hot fire as they could if they were miles away, and to obtain this command over your nerves should be your ambition.

Whenever you think that by doing some deed you will undoubtedly further your cause you must do it, irrespective of all consequences; but before you commit yourself to doing it be certain that the game is likely to be worth the candle.

I always remember the story of an Indian Native officer on the frontier, who, seeing a ghazi on the point of pressing his trigger at his Colonel, rushed forward, and himself took the bullet, thus saving the Colonel's life. He said as he died, "I did this for the good of the Regiment, which could not spare the Colonel Sahib." From the Regiment's point of view he was put-

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ting down a shilling to save a sovereign. The epitaph of the good Earl of Courtenay, quoted by Gibbon, ran as follows, "What I spent I had, what I had I lost, what I gave I have"; and I think the words apply as much if the gift be life as they do if it be pelf.

We all have to die, and it is not a matter of much moment whether it comes a little sooner or a little later. How many months of your life would you care to live over again? If there should be one or two you are fortunate; there are certainly no whole years. There was always a little worm in the pleasure which prevented its being quite perfect. You are young and think that there are hundreds of perfect months for you in the future, but they don't come. All the same, it is your bounden duty to your country not to lose your life unnecessarily.

If you consider the matter you will, I think, admit that the keenest joy you have ever had has been the result of some action which has given joy to other people, and

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the greater the sacrifice you have made, the greater, as a rule, your pleasure in contemplating what you have done. If so, the greatest joy should follow the greatest gift. I am presuming, of course, that in giving his life a man is doing it, not for any selfish or ambitious reason, but wholly because it is his duty and his country demands it.

In some book about the Russo-Japanese War I read the speech a Japanese Colonel made to his Regiment before a night attack. It began, "Some of us will not be so fortunate as to have the honour of giving our lives for our country to-night, and we must endeavour not to give them unnecessarily, as they may be wanted for another occasion, . . . etc." One soldier in going forward was heard to say, "Let thy soul meet mine to-night at the tomb of our mother." The spirit which governed this attack was invincible.

Of one thing I am quite sure, and that is that this existence is only a phase in our lives, and that we all have to learn our lessons sooner or later. Who knows

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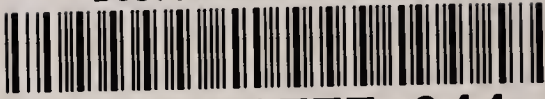
but that the very periods which we are in the habit of looking on as waste and fallow, when we are conscious of injustice, when everything goes wrong, when we are thwarted and balked in our endeavours to help our cause, and are not in a position to pull our full weight, are not the very periods when we are advancing most, fitting ourselves for greater things, and making most progress towards obtaining decorations which will not find their way to the pawnbroker's?

Your affectionate father,

“X. Y. Z.”

THE END

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